



Archdiocese of Southwark  
Commission for

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

November - Newsletter 2016



## "Misericordia et Misera," ("Mercy and Misery")

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap\\_20161120\\_misericordia-et-misera.html#\\_ftn1](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20161120_misericordia-et-misera.html#_ftn1)

There is much to discover in the Pope's Apostolic Letter marking the close of the Year of Mercy, signed on 20 November. Here are a few extracts of special relevance to our work for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

He confirms our mission to implement the Church's social teaching, pointing out that we must be active in implementing social justice, saying

"In our own day, whole peoples suffer hunger and thirst, and we are haunted by pictures of children with nothing to eat. Throngs of people continue to migrate from one country to another in search of food, work, shelter and peace. Disease in its various forms is a constant cause of suffering that cries out for assistance, comfort and support. Prisons are often places where confinement is accompanied by serious hardships due to inhumane living conditions. Illiteracy remains widespread, preventing children from developing their full potential and exposing them to new forms of slavery. The culture of extreme individualism, especially in the West, has led to a loss of a sense of solidarity with and responsibility for others. Today many people have no experience of God himself, and this represents the greatest poverty and the major obstacle to recognition of the inviolable dignity of human life."

"To conclude, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy continue in our own day to be proof of mercy's immense positive influence as a *social value*. Mercy impels us to roll up our sleeves and set about restoring dignity to millions of people; they are our brothers and sisters who, with us, are called to build a "city which is reliable ... The social character of mercy demands that we not simply stand by and do nothing. It requires us to banish indifference and hypocrisy'."

Looking forward, he introduces a new annual World Day for the Poor, to be marked on the Sunday before the Feast of Christ the King. We now have less than 365 days to work out how we will start to mark this event. Pope Francis writes.

'During the "Jubilee for Socially Excluded People", as the Holy Doors of Mercy were being closed in all the cathedrals and shrines of the world, I had the idea that, as yet another tangible sign of this Extraordinary Holy Year, the entire Church might celebrate, on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, the *World Day of the Poor*. This would be the worthiest way to prepare for the celebration of the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, who identified with the little ones and the poor and who will judge us on our works of mercy (cf. *Mt 25:31-46*). It would be a day to help communities and each of the baptized to reflect on how poverty is at the very heart of the Gospel and that, as long as Lazarus lies at the door of our homes (cf. *Lk 16:19-21*), there can be no justice or social peace. This Day will also represent a genuine form of new evangelization (cf. *Mt 11:5*) which can renew the face of the Church as She perseveres in her perennial activity of pastoral conversion and witness to mercy.'

from Phil Kerton

**\*\*\*THE NEXT JPIC SPRING ASSEMBLY WILL BE HELD ON 13TH MAY 2017 AT AYLESFORD PRIORY.  
PLEASE KEEP THE DATE FREE IN YOUR DIARY.**

## **A Christmas Present for Homeless People**

There was very positive news from Westminster on 28<sup>th</sup> October when Bob Blackman's Private Member's Homelessness Reduction Bill was taken through to the Committee Stage at the House of Commons without the need for a formal vote. There was support for the proposed legislation from the government, the opposition and backbenchers of all parties; as well as near universal support from homelessness charities, including Housing Justice.

The thrust of the Bill focusses on the steps Local Authorities will have to take when assessing and assisting someone who presents as homeless, or threatened with homelessness. Many of the changes draw on the initial success of the 'Welsh model', following the implementation of the Welsh Assembly's Housing Act (Wales) 2014; it would appear that these changes have already led to a reduction in homelessness and have the potential to save councils money; although it must be recognised that it is part of a much wider 10-year Homelessness Strategy in Wales.

So what does the Bill do? It introduces a **stronger 'prevention' duty** for people to be considered 'threatened with homelessness' within **56 days** of losing accommodation (rather than 28 days as at present). It provides for **relief for all eligible homeless people** with a local connection – Local Authorities will now have a duty to help secure accommodation for single homeless people who are not in priority need and for people who are viewed as responsible for their own homelessness. It introduces a duty to **provide emergency accommodation** for some single people who are homeless and have nowhere safe to stay. And it strengthens the requirement of Local Authorities to provide **advice and information** before a person is made homeless.

Some concerns have been raised based on the situation in Wales. For example, any legislation is only as good as the supply of housing in that area (people cannot be helped if there are no available homes); further cuts to Local Authority budgets could undermine the ability of councils to meet required duties; relief action means only the provision of a 6-month tenancy, which is in itself not as secure as it could otherwise be (there are calls for a minimum 12-month term).

In the Commons debate at Second Reading stage there were a couple of dissenting voices who were concerned about the potential extra financial strain the proposed changes would place on Local Authorities. But the Minister for Housing, Marcus Jones, stood to support the Bill and pledged the extra funding that would be required. How this operates in practice is yet to be ironed out. Overall, however, the changes have been welcomed by concerned legislators, charities and academics as being a big step forward, although not the full solution – a chronic lack of available homes is still driving many of the problems.

The next step is the Committee stage and this is already underway. Then comes the final vote at the Third Reading which is in the Parliamentary diary for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Many Catholics have already been in contact with their MPs about the Homelessness Reduction Bill, whether by email, letter, or in person at a lobby on 19<sup>th</sup> October. Now I am asking you to contact your MP again, perhaps with a Christmas card, and ask them to be in Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> January, and to vote in favour of the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

As we move through Advent reflecting on the birth of our Saviour in a stable because there was no room at the inn, the best Christmas present you can give to a homeless person is to get your MP to support this Bill.

**Alison Gelder**

**Information Evening for Clergy Hosting—Monday 16th January 2017 from 7.30pm to 9pm**

At St James Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1J 9LL Light refreshments provided. To book go to [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/clergy-hosting-information-evening-tickets-292277728474](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/clergy-hosting-information-evening-tickets-292277728474)

**22nd January 2017 is Homeless Sunday with events nationwide including a National Service at Methodist Central Hall, London please do come along.**

## Why are Eritrean refugees not being offered sanctuary in Britain?

We remember that the church in the Calais 'jungle' was built by Eritrean refugees, one of the main groups of young people asking for safety and that many Eritreans were among those crossing the Mediterranean. So why are Eritreans excluded in the recent announcement of those children the UK govt will accept from Europe? What is happening in Eritrea and why isn't our government offering to help?

In Eritrea people live under oppression of human rights. National Service is imposed on all men from 18 – 40 years but in fact it is indefinite. Desertion from the army is treason and there is a 'shoot to kill' policy. Emigration is only possible with an exit visa and these are rarely granted. In 2015 the United Nations published a report on violations of human rights in Eritrea. It describes a totalitarian state bent on controlling its people through a vast security apparatus that has penetrated all levels of society. The 500-page report says. "It is not law that rules Eritreans – but fear." The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea said "Rule by fear – fear of indefinite conscription, of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, of torture and other human rights violations – must end." (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16054&LangID=E#sthash.j13W0ycC.dpuf>)

The UK has ignored this report – it chose instead to accept a report written by Denmark in 2014. After accepting 2400 Eritrean refugees and in a response to protests from right wing parties, Denmark sent a 3 person fact finding mission to Eritrea which only visited Asmara (the capital), only spoke to Eritrean govt officials and were not allowed to visit prisons. The Danish report concluded that there was a level of democratic participation, evidence of significant improvement and more religious tolerance. But in fact nothing has changed in Eritrea and torture is common. The UK govt suddenly adopted Denmark's report and rejected the findings of the UN report.

There are other factors in this change of policy: In 2013 Eritrea received 200m euros from EU after promising to end indefinite military service but there is no evidence this has happened and there is no monitoring in place. A Canadian company is working in Eritrea mining copper and zinc. Despite the good reputation of Canada, their mining companies work in countries which ignore human rights.

The APPGs (All Party Parliamentary Groups) on refugees and migration held a public meeting earlier this year to give wider attention to the situation of Eritreans.

*Jackie McLoughlin*

### LONDON FAITH LEADERS

launched a new initiative considering the issues of intolerance faced by refugees and migrants called London United. Cardinal Vincent Nicholls, Archbishop Peter Smith, and other senior Christian leaders came together to address the needs for a fairer society in the wake of the EU referendum and share news of the work taking place in the capital. They were joined by Sarah Teather from JRS UK.

### PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS

Please pray for the soul of Ian Lewis. As some of you may have been aware Ian had been ill for sometime. He died in hospital on the evening of Tuesday 29th November with his wife Mary and son at his bedside. Ian was well respected as a Southwark representative for Justice and Peace and CAFOD for many decades.

## TAKE ACTION .....

### Welcoming the Refugee Family

We would like to hear from residents, businesses or other organisations in the Southwark diocese who could offer suitable self contained accommodation of two or more bedrooms available on a rental basis for a minimum of two years, with a rent level set at the local housing allowance, for assured affordability. If you are able to help email the address below.

### Make the Difference

This Christmas send a charity gift with a difference. Choose from a range of CAFOD World Gifts and help families and communities to develop and support frameworks of self sufficiency. Gifts start at £2 for chocolate coins to £4000 for a health clinic. To order by telephone call 0800 1400014 or go to the CAFOD website.

### Connecting the Poor to the Powerful

Could you become an MP Correspondent (MPC) for CAFOD? Get to know your local MP. One in five people worldwide do not have access to electricity—help to change this. Go to <http://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/How-to-campaign/Get-to-know-your-MP>

### Action by Christians Against Torture (ACAT) Messages of Hope

If your parish or community group would like to support the Christmas Card Campaign. ACAT campaigns for the tortured, those under threat of torture, those subjected to death threats because of their religious or political beliefs. Many imprisoned are Christians. Please email: [office@southwarkjandp.co.uk](mailto:office@southwarkjandp.co.uk) to obtain instructions and list, or go to the ACAT website at <http://www.acatuk.org.uk/prisoner.php>

### Peace Service Monday 2nd January 2017 at 7.30pm At St John Fisher Church, Canon Hill Lane, Merton

Take a look at their website.

### Am I A Good Neighbour? Saturday 28th January 2017 from 10am to 4pm

At the Christian Education Centre (DABCEC), 4 Southgate Drive, Crawley, RH10 6RP. Exploring Globalisation and the Fair Society, the challenges of Laudato Si and the principles of the Common Good. Speakers are Bishop Richard, Fr Augusto Zampini Davies, Theological Advisor to CAFOD and Jenny Sinclair, Founder & Director of Together for the Common Good Project. To book a place contact [ruth.gerun@dabnet.org](mailto:ruth.gerun@dabnet.org)

### Our Responsibility for the Environment. Friday 28th to Sunday 30th April 2017.

A retreat at Aylesford Priory. Guest speaker: Fr Eduardo Agosta Scarel, O. Carm. An Argentinian Carmelite, Scientist and Advisor to Pope Francis on Christian Ecology in our World. Cost: £160 single room, £146 shared. Contact the Priory for more information. Email: [retreat@thefriars.org.uk](mailto:retreat@thefriars.org.uk)



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**We would like to wish you and your families a peaceful and holy Christmas season & many blessing for the year ahead.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.**

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